

Clark, Dorothy

Home Ec Club Publishes Prairie Creek History

TS JAN 29 1973

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Community Affairs File 1973

A ways and means project of the Prairie Creek Home Ec Club has resulted in an interesting booklet entitled "The History of Prairie Creek and Prairie Creek Township, Vigo County, Ind.—1816-1972." The club ladies gathered information from Dr. Hunt, Warren Yeager and Mrs. Lola Brown. They included photographs of new and old firetrucks, World War II memorial plaque, the high school building which was torn down in the 1960s, and a model of an early log school house.

Printed at the U.S. Penitentiary, the attractive booklet complete with map is available from members of the club in that community.

In 1819, when Prairie Creek Twp. was platted, it included all of Township 10 North and Range 10 West and all lands east of the Wabash river in Range 11 West. In 1856 the northern tier of sections were taken from this township and added to Priarieton Twp.

The first wagon road (Old Army Road) through the township was opened and used for communication between Fort Knox and Fort Harrison in 1812. It passed nearly north and south, on the east side of Battlerow Prairie, on much the same ground as that of the present road in that locality. This was the only public highway in this part of the state up to the year of 1823 when the present State Road 63 was laid out and opened.

In 1816, the first house in the township was built, a small log cabin of Joseph Liston located about two miles northeast of Middletown. In 1817, David Lykins, Josiah Wilson, William Armstrong and families settled in Section 29, on the Old Army Road near the present Lykins Cemetery. As postmaster, David Lykins established the first post office here. Before 1820, some of the settlers were: Dr. E. Shattuck, Wm. Paddock, Jas. Johnston, Wm. Thomas, Wm. Drake and Nicholas Yeager. This first settlement, called Battlerow, was the first town activity. The first grist mill was here; also a cotton gin, doctor, store, blacksmith, undertaker, etc. The Battlerow area was very active until the mid 1820s when business

began on Prairie Creek and the town started to develop. There are several theories as to the name "Battlerow" but the ladies chose to believe it derived its name from the alleged Indian battles in that area.



DOROTHY J.
CLARK

About 1820 a small village was started about half a mile south of the present location of Prairie Creek. It included three or four log houses and three potter shops and was known as Pottersville. "The clay used in the potter shops was hauled from Brazil and mixed with clay which was dug near the shops." Surely the ladies meant the area which was to become Clay County as neither the county nor the town of Brazil was in existence in 1820.

Middletown derived its name from the fact it was the half-way point between Merom and Fort Harrison for the stage coach line. The name was later changed to Prairie Creek. Where the town was to be located was owned by two men, James Piety who owned the east side of the road (now 63) and Elijah Thomas who owned the west side. They donated land for the town and helped in plat-

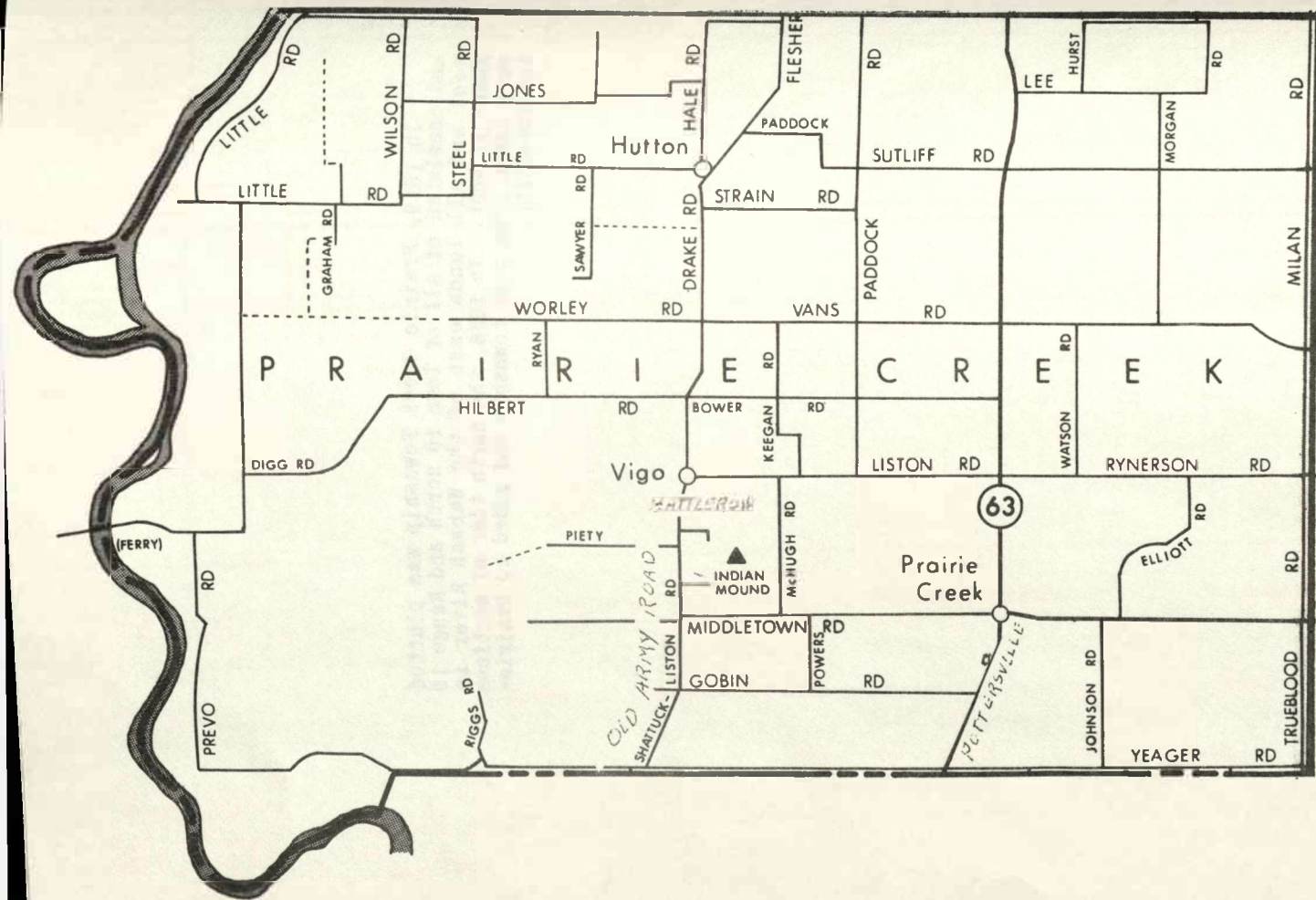
Continued On Page 6, Col. 3.

The History Of
Prairie Creek
and
Prairie Creek Township
Vigo County, Indiana

1816 to 1972

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

In 1819, Prairie Creek Township was platted and consisted of all of Town 10 north and Range 10 west and all lands east of the Wabash River in Range 11 west. In 1856, the north tier of sections were taken from this township and added to Prairie-ton Township.



The first wagon road (Old Army Road) through the township was opened and used for communication between Fort Knox and Fort Harrison in 1812. It passed nearly north and south, on east side of Battlerow prairie, on much the same ground as that of the present road in that locality. This was the only public highway in this part of the state up to the year 1823, when the present state road (63) was laid out and opened.

In 1816, the first house in the township was built. It was a small log cabin built by Joseph Liston and was located about two miles north east of Middletown near the late residence of Mrs. Joseph Liston. In the absence of Mr. Liston, to bring his family to their new cabin, Mr. Thomas Pound and family and some friends, Elijah Staggs, Thomas Hugh and Hamilton Reed reached this cabin on October 16. 1816, took possession and recorded themselves as the first family passing a night in Prairie Creek Township as residents.

In 1817, David Lykins, Josiah Wilson, William Armstrong and families settled in section 29, on the Old Army Road near the Lykins Cemetery (this cemetery is just east of the Mrs. Ruth Clark residence). The first Post Office was established here and David Lykins was the postmaster. Some settlers before the year 1820: Dr. E. Shattuck (on Old Army Road), Wm. Paddock. Jas. Johnston (east of Baptist Church), Wm. Thomas (west of Baptist Church), Wm. Drake (near the home of Valentine Morgan), and Nicholas Yeager. This first settlement, called Battlerow, was the first hub of 'town' activity. The first grist mill was operated here. There was also a cottongin, the doctor, the store, the blacksmith, the undertaker, etc. The Battlerow area was very active until the mid 1820's when business began on Prairie Creek and the town started to develop. Battles between Indians was common in this old area and that is how the name 'Battlerow' became an accepted title.

About 1820 a small village was started about about one-half mile south of the present location of Prairie Creek. It was made up of three or four log houses and, with three potter shops, was known as Pottersville. The clay used in the potter shops was hauled from Brazil and mixed with clay which was dug near the shops.

Stage coaches ran from Merom to Fort Harrison in the early 1800's. The present town of Prairie Creek was half way between the towns and it soon was known as Middletown. One of the last drivers of the hack

was Arch Kisner, the father of one of our local citizens, Mrs. Ola Johnson. The stage coach stop was a large two story house which stood at the present site of the home of Mrs. Ona Hall.

James Piety and Elijah Thomas were the earliest owners of the land. Mr. Piety owned the east side of the road (63) and Mr. Thomas owned the west side. Each man donated land for the purpose of building the town and helped in laying off the town. The town was first surveyed in 1820 and grape vines were used for the surveyor's chain. This work was done by Daniel Johnson, James Piety, Jimmie Ernest, Elijah Thomas, Vincent Yeager and others. One source of information lists Elijah Thomas and James D. Piety as the 'proprietors' of this endeavor and Warren Harper was the 'engineer'. It is thought that the north half of the town was the first to be laid out and the south end was platted a few years later--the total lots finally numbering about 64.

The first building in the town was built of logs and was used as a hotel with Daniel McDonald as the proprietor. The second building was built by Jonas P. Lykins which he operated as a store and as a Post Office. He was the first postmaster in Prairie Creek. The exact date of the first Post Office in Prairie Creek is unknown, historians recording the earliest one of 1817 (this might have been the one at Battlerow) and the last date was 1831. Since the first Post Office was started in Prairie Creek, the town has not been without one. It has been moved to various locations as new postmasters and mistress took over the running of it. The stage coach first carried the mail, then the hack running from Fairbanks to Terre Haute did this service. Still later, the mail was carried from Farmersburg daily, excepting Sunday, by a rural carrier. The name of the Post Office had to be changed to Prairie Creek because another town (near Muncie, Indiana) claimed the name of Middletown. Many of the older citizens of the town still call it 'Middletown'.

In 1818 a log Baptist Church was built near the site of the present one and a grave yard was started. The land was donated by James Piety. James Piety was the grandfather of Mrs. Agnes Williams and Mr. Gus Piety, lifelong residents of Prairie Creek (now deceased) and their children still reside in and near the town. The first Baptist Church was described as about thirty feet square made of hewed logs with a center opening in the roof for the escape of smoke when fire was built in the clay bowl-shaped open fireplace. Often in a Blinding

smoke, the worshipers gave thanks--heart felt thanks for their blessings. This church was the first organized association in the town and was formed by Elder Isaac McCoy and twenty others.

The first political organization was about 1818 with Armstrong McCabe and Nicholas Yeager (father of Vincent Yeager) elected to be magistrates and Conrad Frakes was the constable.

The educational system was begun in the township about this time. It soon was established and claimed a firm hold on the town even in the 1960's when the county then consolidated and removed all schools from the township. The first little crude school house was built on the eastern outskirts of the little town. It was located about three-fourths of a mile north-east of Prairie Creek on the old east-west road, just west of Valentine Morgans (old McClanahan home). Nicholas Yeager, Sr., grandfather of Nicholas Yeager, was the first teacher. Five consecutive generations of Yeagers have taught in Prairie Creek Township.

The first little school was built of logs with the fireplace on the ground and the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. A small one-room school was later built south of the present Church of Christ where the home of Delbert Rhodes now is located. Mary Lovelace, a beloved member of the community, was the first teacher in this school. Other early teachers were: Mrs. Riley Pogue (mother of Lyrie Morgan), Homer Morgan (father of Harvey Morgan), Effie Watson Evans and a score of others.

One of the first trustees of the township was Samuel Fisk, a very prominent citizen who resided in Prairie Creek on what is now the residence of Edna Kirkham. Mr. Fisk was almost deaf and sat on his front porch with a slate and, if anyone wished to speak with him, he would have them write on the slate.

Another early school was located one mile north of Prairie Creek on the Hauger Hill. The exact date it was built is unknown but it was built of logs and the seats were split logs. There was a floor in it and a large fireplace in one end. The covering was also of split logs. A few window panes were placed in this school which made quite an improvement over former structures.

The first grist mills in the township were called "Horse Mills" - one bushel per hour and furnish your own horse power. There were three such mills. About 1821 a saw and grist mill was

built on the Prairie Creek. Later a saw mill and wooden factory stood west of the town. A distillery was erected by Mr. Kelley from Kentucky in 1825. This supplied the town and neighborhood with whiskey sold at \$5.00 a barrel. The distillery was located about two miles southeast of the town.

About 1835 a tannery was started near the site of what is now Rector's Service Station. A brick and tile mill was located just east of the tannery where the residence of Max Reed now stands. There was also a store built on this site. The old brick



ovens are still round on this property and much of the clay was dug from the soil to make the bricks.

A blacksmith shop was later built where the service station now stands. This shop was run by Mr. Wilkinson. This was about the era of Isaiah Wilson's cotton-gin. Fifteen to 30 acres of cotton were grown in parts of the township in the early years and, as late as 1840, patches of $\frac{1}{4}$ to 2 acres were grown here and there in parts of the township.

About 1831 a hotel was built in this prosperous little town. It was first owned by Mr. McDonald and later owned by Mr. Copeland. This hotel stood on what is now the Piety property. We are not sure whether this was where Norah Johnson now lives or the present site of the Don Cochran residence. In 1836, another hotel was built by Daniel Johnson on what is now the residence of Ernest Horn--long known as the Bowen home and store property. About 1900

another hotel was operated where the American Legion now stands west of the town. The front of the Legion Home is part of the original structure. This hotel was operated by Mr. and Mrs. Alpheus L. Athey, who were Lola E. Brown's parents.

The next school house was erected north of the present Baptist Church and it was quite an improvement over the first little schools. It had a better fireplace and the seats were larger. The first term of eight weeks was taught by Nicholas Yeager, Sr., grandfather of the late Otto Yeager, another teacher. Mr. Yeager was paid with such commodities as corn, furs, molasses and some money

About this same time a new frame Baptist Church was built close to the school. It was a very well constructed building for the times. It was heated by a fireplace but the members had to bring chairs from home to sit on. The present Baptist church was built in 1876. The Rev. Asa Frakes was the first minister and his grave is east of the church. This same building has had to be remodeled several times and is now undergoing some more work to replace old and worn timbers.

The present Church of Christ was built about 1854 by Vincent Yeager and was built near what is now the Delbert Rhodes property (where one of the little log schools stood). This group of Christians was organized many years before the building was finally constructed. The early meetings were held at the Baptist Church until a Brother Wolf of Sullivan induced the members to build their own church. The first membership numbered about twenty but when the Chartered Members were listed by the historian, Dr. James B. Maple, he listed the charter membership of 45. He also said the membership was organized in September, 1851 by Elder James Blankenship and Joseph W. Woldo.

The first Methodist Church was established about 1885 and the first members held their meetings in the old school building until the Trustee objected and then they met in the old mill in the upstairs. In September, 1893, they started building the first Methodist Church, located just north of the last school building. They moved into their new building in the summer of 1894 and the first minister was Rev. Leonard Peck, a carpenter, who was paid \$85.00 a year for his services. In 1894 their minister was John Furry and he was paid \$100.00 a year for his work. Mr. George Rice built the vestibule and the spire on the church (his wife was an early member). Bede "Gussy" Johnson helped to organize the church and there were twelve charter

members. Margaret Wilson's mother was one of the charter members.

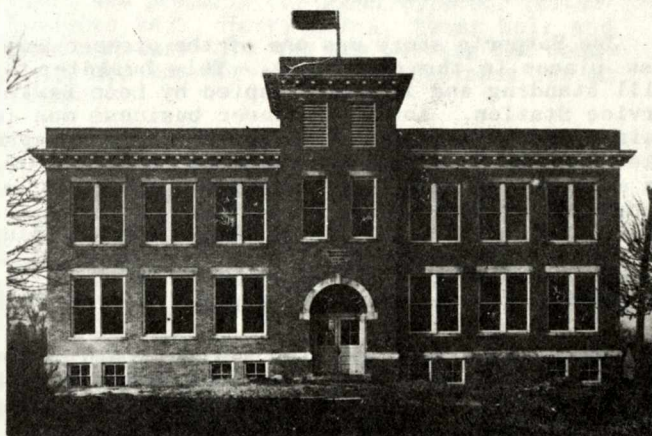
This first Methodist Church was torn down in 1957 and a new building was started. While the building was being built, the members met in the Firehouse in town. Services were held in the new church on July 13, 1958. Records show that the first couple to be married in the new building were Jewel Lawson and Hubert Chambers. The first funeral held in the new church was for the last charter member to pass away, Mr. Charles Rankin. The bell for the new church was moved from the old building. The new church was finally sided in brick and the cornerstone of this building was donated by Mr. Charles Piety, now of Chicago, Illinois. On June 28, 1969, the bricking of this new church was completed and the dedication ceremonies were held--the church is free of debt and is the pride of its members as well as the entire town.

In 1840, a house was built on what is now the home site of Grace Piety. The front of this building, constructed by Phillip Frakes, was used for a saloon while the back of the house served as a family dwelling. Other saloons were built, one was located where the Leon Davis Service Station now stands. One was north of the Bowen residence and still another where the home of William Thomas now stands. Through the efforts of the women and some men, the saloons have long since closed their doors. Mrs. Rachel Gobin, a late resident of town, used to enjoy telling how she took part in putting one of the saloons out of business.

In 1870, a brick school building was built on property just south of the site of the Methodist Church (north-west section of town). This building contained two large rooms downstairs and one large room upstairs. In 1900, the upstairs was divided into two rooms and the first high school classes were taught. In 1907, three years of high school was taught by Mr. McCarter.

In 1910, with Mr. Lloyd as trustee, the last High School building was built on the same site and a full four year high school was set up. Out of the first graduating class of five, four became teachers as have many graduates of Prairie Creek High School. Many business men and women, lawyers, ministers, etc. have graduated from Prairie Creek High School with honors. The new building was a large brick structure and it had a basement. Three furnaces were used to heat all the rooms. Three large rooms in the basement were used for play rooms

and later were used for upper classes such as Home Economics and Chemistry. The first floor was used for the elementary grades and the upper floor was for the high school students. Latin, math, chemistry, and music were all offered in the high school. Small as it was, there was never a lack of good teachers. This building was finally sold to Charles Parks and it was torn down in the 1960's--still a building in good condition. The town misses the zest that was felt for the games played on the gym floor, the plays performed on the stage, the fine marching bands which brought back ribbons from competitions. It was an era that moulded the town in a common pride.



The town of Prairie Creek now has a good system of roads, three churches, one grocery store and two service stations and one funeral home. In 1913, according to the Arbutis School Paper (edited by Dr. Edgar Hunt), the population of the town had about two hundred and five people. The school photos were borrowed from an old issue of The Arbutis. There were more businesses in the little town in 1913 than there are now. At that time they had three general stores, three churches, two hotels, a gymnasium hall, one hardware store, two doctors, one grist mill, three blacksmith shops, a repair shop, a picture gallery, one undertaking department and good roads. The town had much activity in 1913, much more than it now sees.

In 1903, a telephone company was organized, the first switchboard located where the Don Cochran residence now stands. Mrs. Allie Kester was the first operator of the board. It is not known how many telephones were first used in the town but in the 1930's there were over 300 patrons of the private telephone company and Prairie Creek Township was receiving good service, locally and could also get service by 'long distance' to any part of the United States. The Prairie Creek Mutual Telephone Co. was finally purchased (about 1960?) by General Telephone Co. this was another business and service that was missed by the residents of the area. No longer could you call Operator to ask how were the sick, or where was the fire.

Joe Harper's store was one of the pioneer business places in the community. This building is still standing and is now occupied by Leon Davis' Service Station. Another pioneer business man in Prairie Creek was O. L. Wilson. He was a harness maker and was in that business from 1880 to 1930. His shop was south of the Cochran residence and was probably torn down after he closed his business. The G. A. R. post met upstairs above this building (buildings often served multi-purpose meeting places for the community). The charter of the G. A. R. now hangs in the American Legion Home.

James Yeager also operated a store south of the present I. O. O. F. Hall. The hall was built in 1870 and stood south of the Bowen property, on what is the north-east corner of State Roads 246 and 63. It was torn down about 1963. John Bowen and others operated a grocery store in this brick building. Some other prominent business men were W. P. Ring, M. B. Davis and Walter Williams.

The Gobins were a pioneer family who helped to build the town. William Gobin, grandfather of Eddyth Power, moved to Prairie Creek in 1832 and operated a brick plant at the south edge of town. He and his boys built most of the old brick buildings still standing in the town. The old Gobin mill burned in 1943. It was operated by William Gobin, Simon Gobin, Joseph Keaton (grandfather of Buster Keaton, the movie star), Joseph Thompson, Lester Thompson, and Harvey and William Bailey. The last mill operators were James A. Ward and Paul Watson. Their United and Superior flour was well known throughout the area.

Other early citizens were Rachel Gobin, John's wife. She was born in Washington County,

near Salem, Indiana. She remembered Morgan's raid through southern Indiana during the Civil War. She also had a brother killed at the battle of Lookout Mountain. Mary Lovelace was another pioneer. She was born in Orange County. She was the daughter of William and Eliza Hauger and was one of a family of six children. This family moved to Prairie Creek in 1863. Aunt Mary, as she was called, led the singing at the Church of Christ for more than 30 years. She was the village dressmaker, sewing by the light of the coal oil lamp, making many wedding and graduation dresses. She possessed a keen mind until her death at the age of 96.

There has been a funeral director in the town for over a hundred years. David Weir, William's grandfather, was probably the first director followed by Josephus Weir, Harry Welch, Tommy Weir and Curt DeBaun and Curt, Jr. who are serving the community (Curt, Sr. has served in this business for 40 or more years).

Elipalet Shattuck was the resident physician in the early years of the town. He lived a mile and a half north of Lykins settlement (Vigo) and had an extensive practice until his death in 1840. Other physicians through the following years were Thomas Lloyd, Doctor Payne, J.R. Wilson (whose son, Fred still practices in Terre Haute), Doctor Talboth and Ben Rynerson. Doctor Edgar Hunt was our last Doctor in this township. Jehiel Fisk also served in this capacity.

Prairie Creek never had the good fortune to be situated on a railroad. However, in 1907, the Terre Haute and Merom Traction Company was organized and the line surveyed for an inter-urban line from Terre Haute through the east edge of Prairie Creek and on to Merom. By 1908 part of the grades were completed and some bridges were built. Part of the grade can still be seen east of the town as well as in front of the residence of the former Abby Carson on State Road 63, north of Prairieton. Several bridges still exist east of Prairieton. The company went into receivership and the project was never completed.

In 1913 another industry was begun in Prairie Creek. This was the Piety Brothers Bottling Works and was owned and operated by two brothers, E.R. and O.T. Piety. This business was first started in a small store building south of what is now Reed's Grocery Store. In 1914, a new building was erected on the west side of the street and the Bottling Works was moved into it. This was Quite an addition to the town and deliveries were

made to all the surrounding towns, namely Fairbanks. Terre Haute, Farmersburg, and as far south as Merom. This was quite a distance in that period of slow travel. In the corner of this building a Barber Shop was operated by Granville Johnson for more than 50 years, until he retired. The upstairs of this building was used for basketball games and traveling shows. Several famous plays such as, "Way Down East", "Over the Hill to the Poor House" and many other were given in this "Opera House". The building still stands and most of it is in disrepair.

Other early industries were a Creamery at the south edge of town. This was a stock company operated by prominent citizens in the community, namely, Vincent Yeager, Milton Yeager, M. H. Piety and others. Perry Johnson, a young man from Carlisle, Indiana, was the butter maker and did an excellent job turning out this golden goodness. He later married Tressa Gobin and they moved to a farm a mile and one half north of town (on S.R. 63) and specialized in growing fine fruit.

Several years later, another industry, a Tomato Canning Factory was located at the foot of the hill, on the west side of the road, north of the Baptist Church. This also was a stock company and operated for only a few years.

This history has so far dealt with the happenings of the town and Prairie Creek Township up to the 1930's. As all can recall, the townsmen found themselves taking a lively interest in World War II--after all, it took all the young men away from the community.

This prompted the mothers of these soldiers to form a Mothers of World War II, Unit 95, on July 19, 1943. There were fourteen charter members. The first president of the new unit was Mrs. Ethel Chambers and the first vice president was Mrs. Myrtle DeBaun. Mrs. Ruth Clark and Mrs. Myrtle DeBaun have served as state president of this organization and Mrs. DeBaun served as national president for the 1970-71 year.

The purpose of this Mothers Club is to help with small furnishings in the Veterans Hospital throughout the areas where the unit is operated. This unit has furnished a room at the Lafayette, Indiana Home for Veterans. They also go to the Marion and Indianapolis Veterans Hospitals. This unit is still very active and their services are welcomed by our war veterans.

Another still active organization in Prairie Creek is the Masonic Lodge. It was first organized in 1894 and was on dispensation and known as Ernest Lodge, U. D.

The Masons who started the lodge in Prairie Creek came from various other towns to help get it started. Some had been members from lodges near this area and it was not long until there was a busy Ernest Lodge 589, so chartered on May 28, 1895, with 19 charter members. Homer Morgan was the first Master and W. Milton Yeager (Warren Yeager's grandfather) was the treasurer with Dr. J. M. Talbot, secretary. When they first organized, the Masons met in the upstairs of the brick home that is still across from the Hall. This was probably Dan Gobin's house because records show that he was paid a small sum of money at that time (probably for rent). The ground across from their first meeting hall was soon donated by Mrs. Fisk in memory of her brother and the lodge was to carry his name, Ernest. Mr. Ernest had helped in developing the town and this was a very "fittin" name to grace this fine order. Martin Pound was the first man initiated under new charter.

The building cost of the new hall was \$1872.12 and some of the money was obtained by loan but a great amount was donated. The building was made of brick with the exterior using brick made away from here (not soft brick) and the inner walls used soft brick. The trimming was of cast iron and there were cast iron stars used for trim (they cost \$.25 each) and the first dozen of chairs purchased for the new meeting hall cost \$9.00 per dozen. This hall still stands and the Masons and Eastern Stars are now remodeling the down stairs dining hall. The upstairs is newly refinished with the walls panelled.

In April, 1894 20 ladies and one man, Earl Kester, began the Eastern Star Lodge. The Order was called Evelo and one source thought it was named after Evelo Ernest while another said it was taken from an advertisement on a billboard of a face powder! They also met upstairs in the Gobin house and the records say there was sawdust on the floor (it is unsure how an upstairs floor could be of sawdust). The first Worthy Matron was Lula McPheeters and she was the last charter member to pass away (August 9, 1958). The reason there was only one man in the starting of the lodge was because the women wanted to give the initiatory work for the first time to their own family members. A Minnie Ohm came from the Terre Haute Chapter #43 to help get the lodge organized. Evelo (#161) received its charter in November, 1894.

The I. O. O. F. Lodge was formed in Prairie Creek on May 20, 1875 and there were twelve charter members. They met in the upstairs of the Bowen store building. The Odd Fellows built their first meeting hall in 1904. The lower floor of this building was used for a general merchandise and the post office, also (at one time). Proprietors of the store through the years were Treat Piety, Walter Williams, Marvin and Johnny Davis, Estel Newlin and Earl Reed. The building burned in 1939 and was rebuilt--a fine structure of brick which now stands in the heart of the little town. Earl Reed and his wife, Billie, still operate the grocery store.

The Rebekah Lodge was formed March 20, 1880 with 25 charter members. They also met in the upstairs of the Bowen building and they met on Saturday afternoon until the hour was changed to Saturday evening. The fire that destroyed the first Odd Fellows Hall also destroyed all of the records of the two organizations. They are still very active lodges.

Before Prairie Creek had a fire department, the citizens of the area had their bucket-brigade and were quick to come running when the telephone operator called those families nearest the fire. One lady recalled when her home caught on fire and it happened when a play practice was in progress. The news reached the practice group and they dashed over, grabbing every available bucket and soon had a lively bucket brigade going, using two of the nearest wells for water supply. She said the fire was soon put out.

The township received its first fire protection equipment in 1940. Several citizens donated their time and money and purchased a Diamond T truck which held 350 gallons of water. It was furnished by the government with some old army surplus equipment. A building was purchased by the township to house the truck. This building, located just west of the main street of town, had been used for several businesses. The last known business was a mill to grind and mix feed, operated first by Clarence Petty and later by Clebert Kester. The doors on the building were made larger and a second floor was built on for a community meeting place.

In 1947, money was raised by having suppers, bake sales, etc. and the township purchased a new 1946 Dodge fire truck. In 1956, a 1,000 gallon water truck was purchased and at this time the building was enlarged, making it the present size, storing the fire truck and the water tank down-

stairs and a fine large upstairs meeting place which the Home Economics has helped to furnish. The upstairs hall now has a display of all of the former school's class pictures and trophies which were moved there when the school was closed.

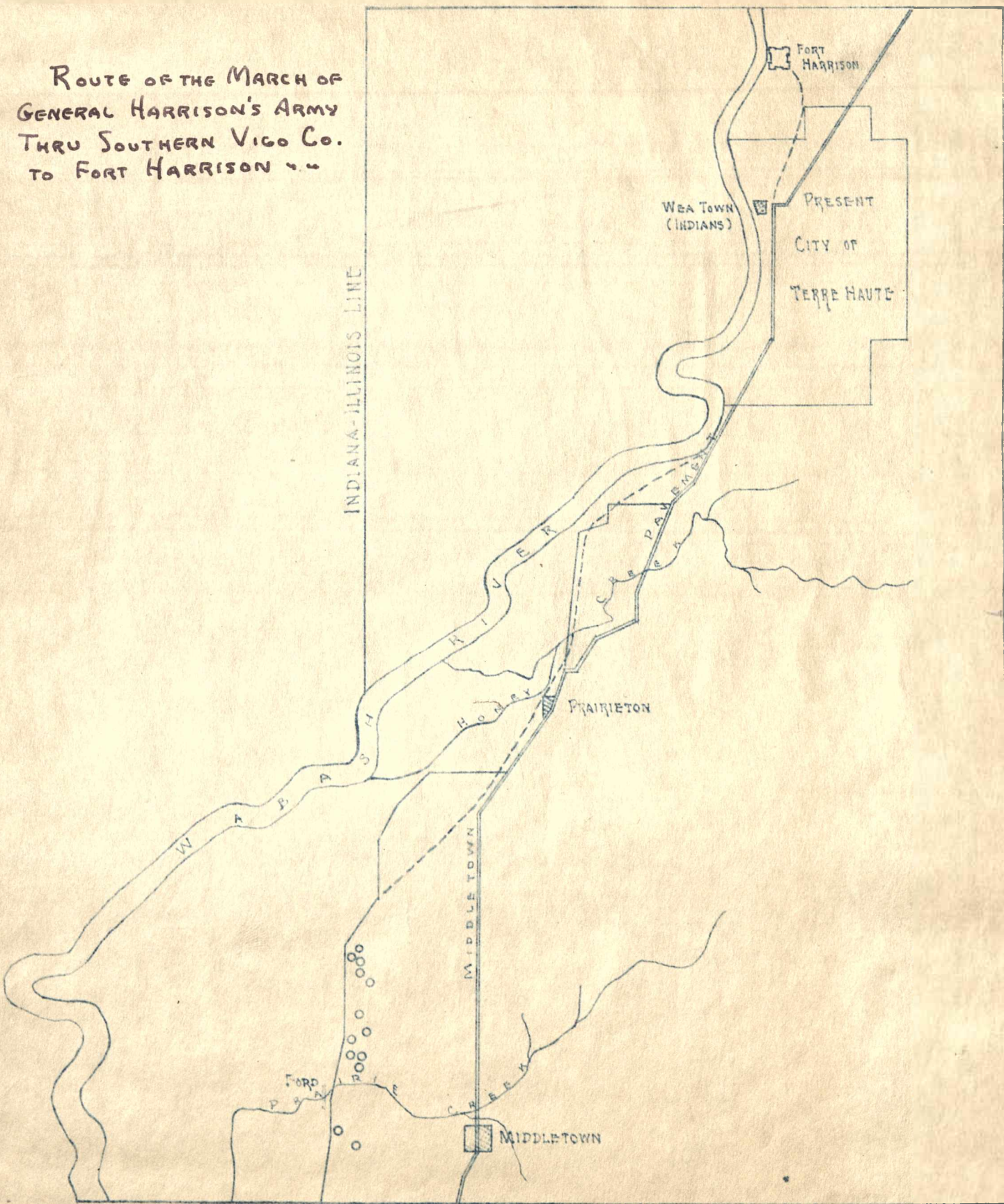


The new fire truck was purchased in February, 1970 and is very fine for a volunteer fire department. The volunteer fire fighters are often called out to fight fires in the Wabash River bottoms in the fall when careless farmers and hunters start fires which rage out of control. The townsmen have been very good about coming out to fight fires and are proud of their work.

The Home Economics Club would like to thank all who have helped to compile this history. Old pictures, from the Arbutis (edited by Dr. Hunt), were furnished by Mrs. Lola Brown and Warren Yeager, Dr. Hunt and many other townspeople have helped search old records for information.

Sam

ROUTE OF THE MARCH OF
GENERAL HARRISON'S ARMY
THRU SOUTHERN VIGO CO.
TO FORT HARRISON 44



PRAIRIE CREEK, INDIANA (scattered site district)

The farming community of Prairie Creek, located 16 miles south of Terre Haute on state road 63, was known first as "Middletown". The name was changed to that of the post office address, "Prairie Creek", in more recent years. It was laid out in August, 1831, by Elijah Thomas and James D. Piety on the Vincennes wagon road which had opened in 1823. The first frame building was a hotel built in 1836 by James Copeland for Z.J.Hunt and provided a stopping place for stage coach passengers. Despite the fact that no railroad tracks ever entered the town, it prospered as a roadside agricultural center in the midst of the fertile prairies extending south from Terre Haute. It soon had mills, schools, distilleries, drygoods stores, smith shops, potteries, two additional hotels, a tanyard, wagon and harness shops, a cabinet shop, four doctors, and a fine Baptist church. The latter institution was organized in May, 1818. Its tall-steepled, wooden building continues in use and was erected in 1840 by Josiah Tate.

The town today is a modest and quiet community of well-kept houses and a few commercial structures, though it has lost all but a few of the business activities that it had as late as 1936. These included four general stores, a flour mill, two restaurants, and two harness and shoe repair shops. At that time the population was 300. In 1980 there were approximately 1339 residents in the entire township.

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William Pickett

Vigo County: A Historical Summary

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Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Vigo County Public Library

January 31, 1972

Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library
222 North 7th St.
Terre Haute, Indiana 47807

INDIANA ROOM

Dear Sirs:

I have searched through county histories, Indiana histories and manuscript materials and I have been unable to trace the origin of the name "Battle Row" for the old Wea Indian Trail now located in Prairie Creek Township. The early settlers in some manuscripts referred to it as the "Old Trace".

The trail was part of an Indian trail leading north from Vincennes which extended to the area of Fort Harrison and was [an early north-south route through the Northwest and later Indiana Territories].

I can only assume that the name is derived from the trails used by Indians and military troops such as U.S. Regulars and territorial militia. During the late 1700's U.S. troops traveled through this area on expeditions to destroy Indian villages on the Wabash river. Then during the years of the War of 1812 from 1811-1815, Indiana Militia and U.S. Regulars marched in this area. Since this Indian trail was an already established route, it seems probable that the troops might have used this trail. Perhaps the early settlers and the soldiers themselves called the trail Battle Row as a consequence of these troops marching to battle.

Sincerely,

Jean E. Singleton
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JES:fr

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